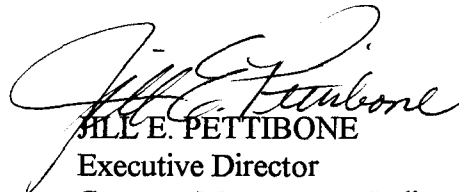IN REPLY
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AQACP

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, DEFENSE CONTRACT MANAGEMENT
DISTRICTS

SUBJECT: DCMC Memorandum No. 97-23, Electronic Mail Questions and Answers
(INFORMATION)


This is an INFORMATION memorandum. Target Audience: All DCMC Employees.

I have been asked many questions about our electronic mail (e-mail) system and why e-mail
sometimes doesn't get through. To help everyone understand what can and can't be expected, I
asked the DCMC Office Computing Working Group and the staff of the Project and Contract
Administration Team (AQACP) to address these issues for you. Attached you will find answers
to the most often asked questions concerning our e-mail system. As a bonus, we've included tips
on e-mail etiquette.

Should you have any questions, the point of contact is Mr. Alex Evan, AQACP, at
(703) 767-6326, e-mail alex_evan@hq.dla.mil.


JILL E. PETTIBONE
Executive Director
Contract Management Policy


Attachment

# Common Electronic Mail Questions and Answers

### 1. Is electronic mail a reliable method to disseminate information?

Sending electronic mail is a reliable way to electronically transmit messages, however, it is not without its unique problems which can frustrate the uninformed user. The complex scheme of Internet protocols, routers, gateways, and post offices can cause failures from time to time. Like making a phone call when no one is there to answer, sometimes you just have to try sending again if something goes wrong.

### 2. If a message is returned to me with a system note "user unknown", what should I do?

First, check the email address and make sure it is correct. If you are sure the address is correct, check with your system administrator to see if there were any problems with the overall system infrastructure. This message can sometimes be sent if a post office is down, or if some other failure has occurred in the system.

### 3. What about if I get a system message "post office unknown"?

Again, check the email address first. Make sure you did not make any typo's. If the address is OK, then the receiving post office is not in operation for some reason and you should try again.

### 4. I send attachments, but the attachments cannot be read. What causes this?

Usually, this is a software problem. The person receiving the attachment should have the same software for optimum results in reading attachments. We in the Defense Contract Management Command have standardized on the Microsoft Office Suite of software, so use one of the Microsoft products when preparing information which should be shared with another DCMC office.

### 5. But sometimes when I send attachments to Headquarters or another District, the attachments just don't get received. Did I do something wrong?

Chances are you did everything right. Messages transmitted to remote offices travel over the Internet. The Simple Mail File Transfer Protocol (SMTP) is used for transmitting messages over the Internet. Attachments get converted via a gateway, which is just another computer software, upon entering the Internet, and get converted back at the receiving gateway. If your attachment did not get received, inform your system administrator so the problem gateway can be traced and corrected.

## 6. How large of an attachment can I send?

The larger the attachment, the more potential for problems. Attachments over 2 megabytes have been known to cause big problems in our email system, so limit the size of your attachments if you want to keep the email system lean and mean for you and your colleagues. However, from a systems perspective, there is no set limit to the size of attachments you can send via DCMC District installed email. Some DCMC sites may have limitations imposed by the hardware installed - typically at these sites, this is around 10 megabytes. But keep in mind, these large files could cause major slowdowns or crashes in our system. Keep your attachments small.

## 7. Sometimes my messages take days to reach their destination. Is this the way an electronic mail system should work?

When sending mail internally, your message is sent virtually instantaneously, plus some time for software refresh or polling. When sending mail out over the Internet, it can take anywhere from a few minutes to three or four days depending on the destination. The DCMC, as everyone else, uses the Internet to transmit mail to and from their remote offices. The variety of routers, Post Offices, gateways, telecom lines, and traffic on the Internet can cause slowdowns.

## 8. What does the message "Post Office Down - will resend in one day" mean?

It means that the remote Post Office is down and your system has been set up to retry to send the message again in one day. If you were to resend the message, the recipient probably would get two messages.

## 9. The DCMC uses two different email packages. Does this make a difference?

No. The DCMD West uses cc:Mail, as does Headquarters. The DCMD East is currently using MS Mail, and are in the process of upgrading to the Defense Messaging System (DMS) and DISA Common Operating System compliant MS Exchange product. They "talk" to each other via SMTP gateways, as do most Internet mail systems. The DCMC plans to move to the Microsoft Exchange product beginning in FY 98.

***10. We have been experiencing days we could not send or receive mail. What caused this?***

East and the old South Districts were upgrading their mail systems to MS Mail, and recently, started and upgrade to Microsoft Exchange. This caused many problems in mail delivery to and from the East, as Post Offices and or gateways were down and or in transition from UNIX mail. In addition, HQ was experiencing intermittent problems with their gateways.

It can happen again. Hardware and or software glitches can cause these problems to unexpectedly pop up.

The DCMC is instaling an enterprise level management software which should enable us to become aware of problems in the email infrastructure as they happen and take more immediate corrective action.

# *MIND YOUR MANNERS*

Here are some e-mail tips from "The Net: User Guidelines and Netiquette," by Arlene Rinaldi, senior programmer at Florida Atlantic University:

Never give your user ID or password to another person. System administrators who need to access your account for maintenance   or to correct problems will have full privileges to your account.

Never assume your e-mail messages are private or that they can be read by only you or the recipient. Never send something that  you would mind seeing on the evening news.

Focus on one subject per message and always include a pertinent subject title for the message.  That will help the user locate the message quickly.

Capitalize words only to highlight an important point or to distinguish a title or heading.  Capitalizing whole words that are not titles is generally termed as *SHOUTING*.

*Asterisks* surrounding a word can be used to make a stronger point.

Follow chain-of-command procedures for corresponding with superiors.  For example, don't send a complaint via e-mail directly to the "top" just because you can.

Be professional and careful with what you say about others: E-mail is easily forwarded.

Be careful when using sarcasm and humor.  Without face-to-face communications, your joke may be read as criticism.  When being humorous, use emotions to express humor.  See the example below by tilting your head to the left.

:-)= happy face for humor